



Statement by Desiree Miloshevic, ISOC Board Trustee  
at the European Internet Foundation (EIF) meeting  
“Internet Governance: the agenda for Rio”

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**The Internet Governance Forum – success in Rio and beyond**

The Internet Society (ISOC) is an independent, international society with more than 80 organizations and 26,000 individual members in more than 180 countries. Since its inception in 1992, ISOC has promoted the evolution and growth of the Internet as a global communications infrastructure, provided support for the Internet Engineering Task Force (IETF), and encouraged the responsible and effective use of the Internet through education, discussion and advice to public policy makers. ISOC’s activities – particularly in developing countries – help expand the reach of the Internet and bring benefits to people around the world.

The Internet Society works with governments, national and international organizations, Civil Society, and the private sector to pursue its objectives in a collaborative and inclusive manner. Operating at both the local level and in the global arena, ISOC works to make the Internet accessible for everyone, to safeguard the integrity and continuity of Internet development and operations, to support and contribute to the evolution of the Internet as an open, decentralized platform for innovation, creativity and economic opportunity.

The Internet Society has participated in the World Summit on the Information Society since its inception, and has been a central player in the Internet Governance Forum. Many of our members from across the stakeholder groupings have been similarly involved, along with representatives of our 80 Chapters from around the globe.

A little Internet governance history:

The Internet Governance Forum found its beginnings in the World Summit on the Information Society that concluded in Tunis in 2005. The purpose of the WSIS was to tackle the “digital divide” through building “a people-centered, inclusive and development-oriented Information Society, where everyone can create, access, utilize and share information...” and

in which stakeholders must “harness the potential of ICTs to drive economic & social development...” Three key areas were: financing strategies, ICT development & capacity building and Internet Governance.

While the focus of the WSIS was supposed, as stated by Kofi Annan, UN Secretary General, to “...generate new momentum towards developing the economies and societies of poor countries, and transforming the lives of poor people” Internet governance really captured the limelight in Tunis. The Summit’s concluding documents included a “multi-stakeholder” forum for dialogue called the Internet Governance Forum (IGF) (and, a commitment to “Enhanced Cooperation” in the development of globally applicable principles on public policy issues).

#### The Internet Governance Forum and its mandate:

So what is the Internet Governance Forum’s mandate, why was it such a finely balanced proposal and why did it have the support of stakeholders in Tunis?

The Tunis Agenda says that the IGF should:

- Be a place for “multi-stakeholder policy dialogue”
- Discuss cross-cutting policies and issues that do not fall within the scope of any existing body
- Have no oversight function and not replace existing arrangements, mechanisms, institutions or organisations
- Have no involvement in day-to-day or technical operations of the net
- Be a neutral, non-duplicative and non-binding process, etc.

WSIS participants agreed to the formation of the IGF because of this balance and because it was felt that an environment in which all interested parties could participate as equals and leverage best practices and experience from around the globe and across stakeholders would be a particularly rewarding experience.

So what were the Internet Society’s expectations of the IGF?

- Focus on development areas that impact access and availability of the Internet – particularly getting the next billion online
- Multi-stakeholder participation
- Clear, focused agenda
- Inform, collaborate & promote “best practice” & expertise sharing
- Leverage existing organizations & knowledge to avoid new structures & duplication

#### Athens, the first IGF:

In Athens we saw the multi-stakeholder model in action in an environment that provided for frank discussion of a range of important issues to the future of the Internet.

Athens was free of negotiation, arranged seating and lengthy policy statements; it was “neutral, non duplicative and non-binding” as per its mandate.

What was clear is that the format of the event allowed for a dynamic and collaborative experience: the discussion among equals approach made for a broader and more open

exchange of views than would have been possible in a more traditional meeting setting. In its novelty it succeeded, more perhaps than many would have imagined.

Within the four theme areas in Athens - openness, diversity, security and access - many of the major issues facing developed and developing countries were addressed, both in the main sessions and in the workshops. The horizontal focus on capacity building and development was the glue that tied the sessions together, with many speakers raising the need for skills development and supportive enabling environments.

We also heard in Athens from those who are dealing with issues related to the four main themes at the local level: what their concerns are, what has worked and what has not, how they have built communities and how they have leveraged the Internet for development.

#### Road to Rio:

The Internet Society has been deeply engaged in the preparatory work for Rio.

- Contributions from ISOC to the IGF consultations
- Participation in regional Internet Governance workshops such as the ISOC INET in Abuja, Nigeria
- Establishing an ISOC membership Ambassadors program for Rio and through organizing workshops on issues such as IPv4-v6, the root server system, Internet Exchange Points...
- Continuing to emphasize the importance of capacity building & access and sharing experiences & best practices

But there are challenges...

There are a range of pressures on the Internet Governance Forum since Athens. They particularly take the form of suggestions that the event and its organizing processes should be more structured, more results oriented. While this might seem at first glance to be reasonable, it masks a subtle shift that begins to move the IGF away from a space for dialogue to a space where policy formulation and decision-making might occur.

What is important is that all stakeholders must ensure that the useful and productive environment embodied in Athens continues. Steps that would take the IGF away from its novel forum structure, steps that would seek to impose a more structure on the IGF would be contrary to the spirit of the IGF and would limit its value and potential to facilitate constructive change.

#### The focus area in Rio:

As with Athens, the themes of access, openness, diversity and security are continued into Rio. One new theme has been added, one that was considered to have been inadequately addressed in Athens, that of "critical Internet resources". Critical Internet resources can, depending on who you discuss the issue with, either mean a narrow approach related only to Internet Protocol addressing (the numbers) and the Domain Name System (the names), or a broader approach that seeks to discuss IP addressing and the DNS as two elements of the broader issue of connectivity and access. More on this in a moment.

Each of the four original themes remains as important as ever. Each addresses issues that are of importance no matter the region that one comes from. For example, access in all its facets

is the greatest challenge that all of us face in getting the next billion users online and the Internet Society has been reemphasizing the central importance of access and connectivity to the discussion in Rio.

During a recent Internet governance session at ISOC's INET meeting in Abuja Nigeria, access dominated the discussion. The session focused was on what can be done locally to address access issues, including the implementation of Internet Exchange Points and national backbones, incorporating fiber into national infrastructure projects, encouraging trans-border traffic and regional traffic, encouraging competition among service providers, and creating the right kind of regulatory and enabling environment.

And access is not just about infrastructure and interconnection costs. Much can be achieved through developing locally relevant content, through facilitating an environment that supports local content investment and business certainty (including an infrastructure to host local content), and the availability of content development training. Building the communities to drive demand, whether they be consumer groups, business associations, or communities promoting and supporting education and training, will be essential.

Openness is another theme that deserves greater attention and focus. The Internet is an unprecedented tool for accessing information and for communications. Questions of balance will likely dominate this issue in Rio: freedom of expression, protection of privacy, intellectual property rights, access to content, fundamental rights, etc. These issues are dealt with very differently by the nations that are represented at the IGF: the border-free Internet allows for significant opportunity, both for individual enrichment and national development, but can pose challenges to nations who's social or cultural ways may appear to be threatened by it.

The Internet has grown from being perceived as a threat to diversity to being understood as a tool for promoting diversity through the development of local content, the internationalization of domain names, the facilitating of multilingualism, the preservation of cultural heritage and identity, etc. These issues will be at the core of the discussion in Rio, along with issues related to accessibility, particularly for disenfranchised communities (whether for geographic, gender, disability, etc.). Such communities can be found around the globe, no matter the level of economic development, and ensuring that they can and are able to access the Internet will be an important element in bringing the next billion users online.

The last theme continued from Athens is that of security. The Internet presents its users with endless opportunity – it is a communications tool like none other. However, there are those who would use it for unscrupulous or criminal purposes, and in an age of unprecedented and borderless information flows international cooperation is becoming increasingly critical for combating such purposes. Cross-border cooperation to address cyber security threats will be a focus area, as will the role all stakeholders have to play in ensuring that their information and data is secure. Another area that will likely be discussed is that of identification and authentication and the importance of being able to foster trust online. This is a key issue for the Internet Society – an environment of trust online is essential to the Internet's future success.

And finally, critical Internet resources. The Internet Society does not believe that a discussion of only IP addressing and the DNS would be particularly useful – after all, neither are critical if one has no access or physical infrastructure to the Internet. The most useful approach would be to better understand what critical Internet resources are, and to understand their use and management in the context of Internet development, infrastructure and access,

and how stakeholders can participate in the processes of the organizations that are administering these resources.

Certainly we would not want to see this particular issue become a political football that detracts from the broader discussions in Rio.

#### The future of the IGF:

One of the key sessions in Rio will be on “Taking Stock and the Way Forward,” essentially an opportunity to review the IGF’s success to date.

The Internet Society believes that the measure of the IGF’s success is not the number of people that attend the IGF and the noise that is generated, or whether it is addressing every point of its mandate, but rather in how the best practices and experience sharing has contributed to furthering the deployment of the Internet at the local and national level. What is concretely happening as a result of the IGF? How has discussion at the IGF changing the way Internet issues are dealt with?

Perhaps the most important question though is what is the value of the IGF to those who are facing everyday access challenges at the local level? We have heard concerns expressed that the IGF still has yet to prove its value to developing nations. Bringing more developing country representatives to the IGF and finding ways to ensure that participation in Internet governance discussions at the local national and regional levels will be critical to the forum’s success.

The Internet Society believes that the IGF is a useful venue for discussing issues of importance to the future of the Internet. It provides a unique opportunity to discuss themes that are central to Internet development no matter the region the participants are from. It allows for best practices and experience sharing and for take-aways that can be applied locally. It allows for a fuller discussion and appreciation of the opportunities that the Internet presents all nations and peoples.

The IGF is a new model, one that will deliver increasing value for so long as it encourages dialogue, best practices, dynamic collaboration, community building and experience sharing.

Thank you.